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The INFORMANT

The Kansas City Missouri Police Department



KCPD detectives and Feds fight disability fraud



KCPD detectives caught this man, who claimed to be disabled, returning his cane to a drug store after a medical exam.

Veteran KCPD detectives recently watched as a man who already had received \$11,000 in Social Security disability benefits bought a cane at a local drug store just before a medical exam to determine whether he was still entitled to receive those benefits. The man limped and relied heavily on the cane at the exam. When he left, he picked up the cane, put it under his arm and then promptly returned it to the drug store.

That man now will have to repay the \$11,000 he took in disability benefits, and he was assessed a civil monetary penalty of \$80,000. This is all thanks to a couple of Kansas City detectives and an analyst who work in a

specialized unit that has been flying under the radar for the last four years, quietly saving U.S. taxpayers \$45 million since its inception in 2010.

The Cooperative Disability Investigations (CDI) Unit is a division of the Social Security Administration's Office of Inspector General. The CDI Unit in Kansas City is one of 25 across the United States that have saved taxpayers \$2.7 billion. Another seven such units will be coming online in the next two years.

"The return on investment that these units provide is very attractive to Congress," said Troy Turk, Special Agent in Charge of the Kansas City Office of Inspector General, of the expansion. "It's about a \$12 to \$14 return on every \$1 spent on these units."

Report suspected disability fraud

Online: oig.ssa.gov/report

By phone: 1-800-269-0271 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The KCPD staff members assigned to the local CDI office include an analyst and two detectives. Because they often operate in a covert capacity, they will not be named in this article. Working alongside state- and federal-level employees who sniff out disability fraud, they investigate cases in the western half of Missouri and across Kansas. Turk said CDI units nationwide always look to partner with a respected and successful local law enforcement agency to assist them in investigations.

The United States pays out \$175 billion in disability benefits to 14 million people annually – more than the amount spent on welfare and food stamps combined, according to a 2013 National Public Radio investigation. Missouri ranks No. 9 in the nation for percentage of residents ages 18 to 64 on disability, at 6.1 percent.

NPR reported that in the last 15 years, the number of people receiving disability benefits has nearly doubled. With that, naturally, has been a rise in fraudulent claims. State workers identify red flags in applications for new and continuing benefits. They then send those suspicious cases to the CDI Unit. There, the KCPD analyst conducts background checks on the claimants. Then the two KCPD detectives investigate the cases for fraud, interviewing witnesses and suspects, conducting surveillance and other investigative techniques. They don't often come up empty-handed. They found fraud in 85 to 90 percent of the cases investigated in 2013.

One of the cases investigated by the Kansas City CDI unit recently was featured on the television show "Nightline." It showed video of a Kansas City woman who claimed she was unable to lift anything helping a store employee lift her new electric scooter – paid for by Medicaid – into her van.

One of the KCPD detectives assigned to the CDI Unit said some cases are referred for the CDI's investigation by other KCPD officers.

"They'll say, 'I had to fight that guy for 30 minutes, and he says he's on disability,'" the detective said.

When confronted, some of the fraudsters show little remorse for taking tens of thousands of dollars from taxpayers.

"A lot of people don't realize they're doing anything wrong," the detective said. "They think Social Security disability is an entitlement.

They think you get denied (for benefits) three or four times, then you get accepted, and that's just how the system works."

Investigators in Kansas City's Cooperative Disability Investigations Unit are instead working to ensure only those who truly need the government's assistance receive it.

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2014 Memorial Service

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Tip-a-Cop

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Upcoming Events

Officers, athletes carry Special Olympics torch



Forty-five officers from KCPD and four other law enforcement agencies, as well as five Special Olympics athletes, raised awareness for the cause during the annual Torch Run on May 23. The event featured 20 more participants than last year. The runners, escorted by KCPD's Traffic Enforcement Unit, finished up at the South Patrol Division, where a cook-out provided by the Kansas City Police Credit Union awaited them.

2014 KCPD Memorial Service



Artwork installed for Headquarters renovation

Suspended from the foyer ceiling of the new Headquarters Community Room is a recently installed work of art by California artist Rob Ley, founder of Urbana Studio in Los Angeles.

Porter Arneill, Director and Public Art Administrator of the Municipal Art Commission, coordinated the process by which the artist was chosen.

According to Arneill, "Rob Ley was selected in large part because of his remarkable ability to merge art and design. The panel was also impressed by his understanding about the healthy tension Police experience as both guardians and members of the community (he has a cousin who is a police officer in Illinois.) The artwork represents many individuals making up a much larger community."

The piece is untitled.

The city's one percent for art ordinance, passed in 1986, mandates that one percent of the construction budget of a new or renovated city building be set aside for art. Kansas City is one of more than 400 municipalities in the U.S. with similar programs.

A Public Art Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was distributed on June 1, 2011, to artists across the nation with a June 23 deadline. The artists were asked to keep in mind the end product must be considered indestructible; able to withstand day-to-day wear and tear.

Arneill then formed an artist selection panel consisting of eight voting members, including then-Major Jerry Gallagher, then-Captain Sharon Laningham, Officer Rhonda Schulte; City Architect Eric Bosch; Elizabeth Bowman, KC Municipal Courts; Artist Glen North, American Jazz Museum; Curator Joe Houston, Hallmark; and Tom Bean with the Municipal Art Commission. There were several design professionals from Helix Architects named as non-voting alternates.

The panel reviewed the portfolios and background information submitted by over 90 artists. Of the 90, only 5 local artists responded to the call. The competitors were reduced to the ten top



contenders, and then to the final four.

In July of 2011, these four were brought to town, provided a project orientation, and then participated in 30-minute interviews with the panel to share concepts and field panel questions. They brought models or pictures they felt would best convey their visions and ideas. At the end of the day, the panel chose Ley. He has a Master of Architecture from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and a Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

The artwork components were fabricated in the artist's studio then delivered by semi-truck earlier this year in several large crates that were stored at the South Patrol Division vehicle storage building.

"They were larger than we expected. Thankfully, Fleet personnel were able rearrange some vehicles to accommodate the crates," said Major Sharon Laningham of Capital Improvements. "Then in May, the artist and a crew of four came to install the piece. They worked several long days, late into the evening," she added, renting a U-Haul to move the parts from South Patrol to Headquarters.

According to documents supplied by Ley, each gold and aluminum tube was bent multiple times into compound arcs by a computer-run machine and fitted together precisely to create the completed artwork. Each tube is attached to a wavy metal frame hung from the ceiling.

LED lights placed in the mullioned windows will shine upward to showcase the artwork; making it visible to the public in the evening and night hours.

An invitation to attend the upcoming Community Room Dedication event will be extended to Ley.

Laningham also said the "Modern Communications" statue formerly between Headquarters and the Municipal Court building will be placed in a niche of its own on the north side of the Communications building facing Municipal Court. Both Fallen Officer memorials will be re-placed in front of Headquarters, and the original 1938 Headquarters dedication plaque will be displayed with a new dedication plaque on the reverse side, signifying the renovations.



Tip-A-Cop for Special Olympics Missouri

Officers from Kansas City and other area police and sheriff's departments served as wait staff and bused tables on May 3 at the Metro Area's three Corner Café restaurants. It was all part of the annual Tip-a-Cop fundraiser for Special Olympics Missouri. Officers raised nearly \$11,000 for the charity. At left, Officer Rob Shorrock took plates from a family finished with their meal.

Upcoming Events

June 10

**Board of Police
Commissioners Meeting
(South Patrol Division)**

June 11

Battle for Blood

June 22

**Mounted Patrol Open
House**

July 10

**Board of Police
Commissioners Meeting
(Academy)**

July 31

25-Year Ring Ceremony

The Informant is a publication of
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(816) 234-5170
www.kcpd.org

Officially Speaking

Awards

Distinguished Service Medal
Officer Selvir Abidovic
Detective Christopher Krueger

Certificate of Commendation
Timothy Taylor

Life-Saving Award
Officer Damon Hawley

Meritorious Service Award
Sergeant Douglas "Skip" Cox

Retirements

Officer Juniper Hansen
Supervisor Darryl Hipsher
Parking Control Officer Mary
Oliver

Obituaries

Officer Frank Buckle

The mission of the
Kansas City Missouri
Police Department
is to protect and serve
with honor and integrity.

**Kansas City Missouri Police Department
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